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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION Q THAI MILITARY COUP - TOKYO

LEAD STORIES: Most Thursday morning papers gave top play to Wednesday's election of Chief Cabinet Secretary Abe as LDP president. The national Diet is set to elect Abe, the youngest LDP leader in history, to be Japan's new prime minister next Tuesday.

[1](#)1. "Coups Expose Fragility of Thai Democracy" An editorial in the top-circulation, moderate Yomiuri commented (9/21): "...The impact of the Thai military coup has been felt both at home and abroad. The nation's credibility has been seriously damaged. The top military commanders who seized power created a 'Council of Administrative Reform' and declared that the military would keep the situation under control and return power to the Thai people as soon as possible. The council should do its utmost to keep these promises.

[1](#)2. "This year has seen a continuing political crisis in Thailand over the question of whether PM Thaksin should resign due to questionable stock dealings by his family.... Following the collapse of his government, rumor is rife that Thaksin will seek refuge in a foreign country.... The military coup revealed the fragility of Thailand's democracy and will likely have a negative impact on Indonesia and other countries in the region that are trying to get democracy to take root."

[1](#)3. "A Deplorable Setback for Thai Democracy" The liberal Asahi editorialized (9/21): "...While there was a coup in Thailand in 1991, the Thai people staged massive rallies for democratization and toppled the military regime the following year. Since then, a constitution has been created, and power has changed hands via the ballot box several times. Many people worked hard to institutionalize democracy. This coup has, in one blow,

shattered their achievements, representing a deplorable setback to Thai democracy.

¶4. "It is difficult to predict how the influential Thai royal family will react, or what Thaksin and the opposition party will do next.... Although the coup is unpardonable, the military's criticism of the Thaksin government for splitting the nation is not wide of the mark.... Both the ruling and opposition parties need to lay the groundwork for politics that will preclude the military's involvement."

SCHIEFFER